

Hon. Dora L. Irizarry  
United States District Judge  
Eastern District of New York  
225 Cadman Plaza East  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

September 30th, 2013

Honorable Judge Irizarry,

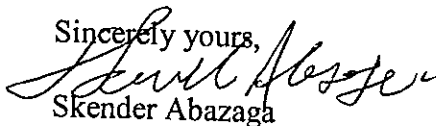
My name is Skender Abazaga and I am Kushtrim's father. I'd like to think that I have raised all four of my children right and while no parent can speak ill of their children, I especially cannot accept Kushtrim as a criminal because of his trouble with the law. We have never had any such issues with any of the members of our family and certainly not with Kushtrim. I moved to the United States in 1996 when our finical and security conditions forced me to leave Kosovo so that I can provide for my family and find a way to bring them all out of Kosovo safely. Kushtrim as a teenager was forced to take over my role and fill in the role as the oldest child. I am extremely proud of how he was able to take over and handle himself and I feel guilty for the years he has lost being a normal teenager because he had to become the bearer of unimaginable burdens during those years. However, looking back now at some of the teenagers with a missing parent and seeing how easy it is for them to fall in the wrong path, I can't help but feel extreme pride on how he was able to keep himself grounded and humble without having a father figure in his life and becoming one for the younger ones.

Kushtrim has the biggest heart of anyone I know and everyone who has ever met him can attest to that. When he found himself in this situation and we needed to reach out to everyone who knew him for help, not a single person blinked an eye before jumping in to help in every way that they could - even by offering everything that they owned as bond for his bail. That is because everyone loves and respects him for everything that he has ever done for them. Kushtrim's life has never been easy and as a parent that is very difficult for me to bear. He is always putting others before himself and willingly will take on any responsibility in hopes of helping others around him.

Honorable Judge Izarry, I promise you I did not raise a criminal but an honest, trustworthy and kind young man that I am very proud of and if you ever had the chance to meet him outside of the courtroom you will find him the same, I personally guarantee that! The past year has been extremely difficult on my family and while I would normally have my oldest son to turn to for support and guidance in a difficult situation, I don't have him there and we all feel lost. I wish your honor would take his case into consideration as a parent looking out for her child while doing right by our laws.

I thank you very much for your time and consideration in reading all of our letters and most of all I thank you for taking the time to make this very hard decision for all of us so that both justice and peace is served for all of us. I may be reached at 646-338-9206

Sincerely yours,



Skender Abazaga  
2144 Bronx Park East, #4K  
Bronx, NY 10462

Hon. Dora L. Irizarry

September 27th, 2013

United States District Judge  
Eastern District of New York  
225 Cadman Plaza East  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Dear Honorable Judge Irizarry:

As Kushtrim Abazaga's mother, I am writing to you a plea for my son and to help you better understand our son outside of the evidence brought to you by the prosecution, as I know and raised him. I would like your honor to also have the opportunity to get to know him as the loving, son, brother and friend that he is to all those who know him.

Kushtrim grew up in a small town of Gjakova with his entire family. We as parents are both college graduates and were both employed by the local government in Kosovo as social workers and activists in helping our ethnic groups of Albanian in gaining our citizen rights against the Serbian government who had occupied our land for over 100 years. Being one of the few citizens of Kosovo employed with four children attending school and excelling put us at an advantage over the other citizens of Kosovo who mostly were unemployed and could not afford to educate their children. We weren't awfully rich but lived a modest and happy life.

That was until in a blink of an eye, it all came crashing down on us. In 1990, the Serbian government opened their claws and further attacked the Albanian communities as a way of forcing them out of the country so that they could claim it as their own. My husband and I were both fired from our jobs and further became primary targets for being activists against the Serbian government. With no income, daily gruesome threats to his life from the Serbian masochists and 5 mouths to feed, my husband had to make the hardest decision of his life - 6 years later he was finally able to escape Kosovo for survival, leaving us to fend for ourselves while doing so. Taking all of us with him was too dangerous as we as a family were a primary target with our involvement in the democratic activities against the Serbian regime; and therefore not an option.

When my husband migrated to the United States on 1996, I was left home alone with 4 very young kids of ages 15, 13, 11, and 9. As a teenager, losing his father must have been very devastating to Kushtrim, but he never showed any weakness. He stepped in and helped me raise the three younger ones, and made sure that they did not feel and miss their father. He was forced to grow beyond his young years and swallow his fears of losing his own life as well as those he loved the most to help me and his younger siblings overcome theirs. His personality and character was shaped by the fear and need to help his family. Him and I became especially close as I depended on him to understand the reality of the situation which was beyond his young comprehension - we could die in any minute of any day. He helped me dress the young ones and pack escape bags in case of an emergency all while explaining to the younger ones that it was for a surprise trips we had planned. He took in threatening calls that would make an adult run for their life and had to brush it off and explain it was a "wrong number" with a smile on his face to his siblings - at only 15 years old!

He also became a primary help when the time for us to escape to the U.S. came. Although we had approved visas to come to the U.S. the road outside of Kosovo was unimaginable. we had to cross borders full of Serbian army pointing guns at us, who could simply pull us out of the line and shoot us and the men of the family were a primary target!

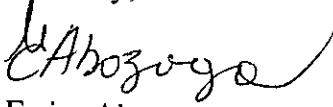
Once we reached the U.S., his parental instincts had already been shaped where he continued helping our family the best he could. While going to high school, he worked a few different jobs as a buss boy, waiter and doorman at minimum wages to help my husband and I pay rent and feed our family while the younger ones attended school. Every person he met and came across with here in the U.S. were always fascinated by his story and presence and as witnesses to his respect and love for his family, he became a true role model to his and the elder generation. They all refer to him as "Bace" which is an endearment and a respectful term our community uses to refer to the elderly.

We finally started to feel like life was coming back to normal and were getting all ready to spend part of our summer in Kosovo where our entire family from all over the world comes together once a year for a family reunion and all our family celebrations take place. Last year we were going to celebrate our younger daughter's Fitore Abazaga (now Berkani) wedding on July 22nd, 2012 when this unfortunate situation aroused. The wedding took place without the one person we all, and certainly Fitore who looks up to her older brother as a father figure, was gone missing as we were not informed he had been picked up at the airport by the federal agents.

Your honor, we understand and accept prices to pay for mistakes and have taught that to our children their entire life, even Kushtrim accepts that. We only ask that your honor please give consideration to him as the loving and caring individual he is outside of this mistake and what it would mean to all of us to have this behind us. I have a husband with sever asthma that any emotional distress can cause massive attacks - he already had 2 landing him in the ICU, I have a younger child who is legally blind and insurance does not accept the procedures he needs to have to help him from completely loosing his sight which is to come in a few years if we don't do anything about it. I am still in the process of healing from the major surgeries I had from the pancreatitis I had a few months ago and it looks like I will need another one to close the bile duct which melted from the impact causing my pancreas juice to leak to the other parts of my body. I need Kushtrim not only to help me emotionally through these tough times but also financially - so far we owe over 100,000 U.S. dollars to the hospital after what the insurance covered and have yet more procedures to come.

Honorable Judge, as a mother I beg you to bring my son back to us and allow my family to heal back emotionally, physically and financially while being together as we always had.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Abazaga", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Emine Abazaga

Cell phone number (347) 301-7555

2144 Bronx Park East, #4K

Bronx, NY 10462

Krenare Abazaga Skivjani  
500 Snows Mill Avenue, Apt.818  
Tuscaloosa, AL 35406

Hon. Dora L. Irizarry  
United States District Judge  
Eastern District of New York  
225 Cadman Plaza East  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

September 11, 2013

Re: Kushtrim Abazaga

Honorable Judge Irrizarry:

My name is Krenare Abazaga Skivjani, I am a resident of Tuscaloosa, Alabama. I work as an APC Program Coordinator for the University of Alabama. I am writing this letter to support my brother Kushtrim Abazaga.

My family and I were devastated to find out that Kushtrim was in trouble with the law. Kushtrim is the oldest of the four of us. He has always been a supporting brother in every aspect of our life. When we were at very young age in 1996, when our father was forced to leave the country to come to the United States due to unstable economic and political situation in our home country of Kosovo. Naturally, Kushtrim stepped up and became like a father to us from 1996 and on, he never stopped being our "big" brother and father like figure.

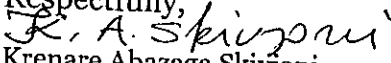
He has always been very kind and supportive of our dreams. He has taught us to be responsible and respectful to our parents and community. He has always been honest and respectful to everyone whom he knew. We accredit him for all our accomplishments in our life and are willing to put our life's accomplishments in jeopardy to testify his honesty and kindness to everyone around him. Ever since we moved to Unites States on February 1999 he made sure all of us went to school and got a college degree.

Our sister Fitore got marred on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2012 and we were devastated to find out that Kushtrim as unable to attend the wedding that took place in Gjakove, Kosovo. On July 13<sup>th</sup> 2012, my husband and I took our newborn baby girl to visit his uncle in New York. Kushtrim had a chance to meet his 5 weeks old nice for the first time in Bronx NY and was very proud to be an uncle.

My baby girl Lea and I visited Kushtrim four time at the federal prison and saw how much he adores and loved his new nice. He regrets that he has missed the first year of my baby's life and even in jail he makes sure to call us constantly to check and see how our baby is doing and growing and send her a lots of hand made presents.

My husband, our baby girl and I are planning to go to New York for the holidays. It would be a great pleasure and a blessing to spend the holidays together with the family, knowing that Kushtrim is out free and safe.

Thank you for taking your time and reading our letters.

Respectfully,  
  
Krenare Abazaga Skivjani

Cell: (334) 549-6224

Hon. Dora L. Irizarry  
United States District Judge  
Eastern District of New York  
225 Cadman Plaza East  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

October 3rd, 2013

Dear Honorable Judge,


My name is Lirak Berkani and I am Kushtrim Abazaga most recent brother in law. I married his younger sister Fitore Abazaga on July 22nd, 2012. I moved to the United States permanently on October 6th, 2012, shortly after our wedding. While my English is not too great, I worked for an international organization back Kosovo and have learned it through there but I do apologize for any grammatical errors in advance.

I personally know Kushtrim for as long as I have dated Fitore Abazaga, which is a little over 10 years. However, I have known of him longer than that since we were both born and lived in the small town of Gjakova in Kosovo. For the time I have known him he showed a lot of respect to me and his sister, my now wife Fitore. I know Kushtrim as a person who would do anything for a friend, a brother, a sister. His heart is clean and he is one of the most unselfish person who I met in my whole life. I know for sure that everyone who knows Kushtrim misses him whenever he is not around. He transmits positive energy and joy to people around him.

Kushtrim and his Qlirim (his younger brother) were the last 2 persons to come to our wedding from America. His parents, older sister, their aunt Elvane Bunjaku, his older brother-in law Arben Skivjani and their 5 weeks old daughter Lea were all there and helped us with final details for the wedding. Kushtrim and his younger brother could not leave their jobs until the day before when they flew out. We were all shocked and saddened to only see Qlirim come out in the airport. We looked everywhere and called every agency to find out why he was not on the plane, we were very worried but it was the day of the wedding and too late to cancel. It was supposed to be a happy day for all of us but I could not be happy when my future wife and her family were sick with worry. The wedding went on with over 300 guests we had invited and could not cancel on the day of but it was certainly not the happy time we all thought it was going to be.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter honorable judge and I do hope for the best possible outcome for my now new family. Should you need to contact me for any reason I may be reached at 917-864-2725.

Sincerely,

  
Lirak Berkani  
2144 Bronx Park East, #2D  
Bronx, NY 10462



Hon. Dora L. Irizarry  
United States District Judge  
Eastern District of New York  
225 Cadman Plaza East  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

September 28th, 2013

Dear Honorable Judge Irizarry,

Our mistakes do not and should not define our character. Honorable judge, I am writing to you as Kushtrim's younger sister to help give you a better sense of who Kushtrim is outside of the circumstances he is in as well as to help you see what this entire situation has done for us all. As an older brother, he always has and still does serve as a role model and the "go to person" for any issues or concerns myself and other siblings find ourselves in, a character which was taught to him by our loving parents who have been married for over 30 years. I understand and fully agree that there is a price to pay for our mistakes in life but sometimes the price we pay is way bigger than that of the mistake itself and the punishment that comes with it is truly unbearable. The law of the land has its own definition of a price to pay for an illegal activity while taking into consideration the intent and character of the person committing the crime, along with the frequency of it, which your honor decides on through your wisdom and human aspect of it. But how do we define a price to pay in Kushtrim's case? Our judicial system gives an illegal activity a period of time spent in incarceration along with other means of punishment which your honor finds redeemable. But what about the self and humanity punishment of it? I want your honor and the court to know that Kushtrim's entire family has been punished and is paying the price of Kushtrim's mistake, alongside with him, and will continue to be paying for it long after his incarceration days are over.

As an educated, honorable, trustworthy and kind family, we have never been faced with a situation of this nature and it is very hard for us to accept anyone seeing us or our most loving, considerate and kind brother being portrayed in the manner he is in the courtroom. I want your honor to know that the price Kushtrim and our family is paying is beyond any amount of time spent in prison. Every step of the way, ever prison visit, every courtroom hearing is an unimaginable experience for us, especially for our parents who have only seen these scenarios in the movies - we are paying and accepting the price. This is not an every day life for us - going to school, working, spending time with family and helping each other through ever day challenges is. My mother had a near death illness recently which she is still battling with today and is expected to have more surgeries in the future as she is not healing properly. I strongly attribute this to the emotional distress she has been going through in the past year or so and that is because after every visit to Kushtrim and every courtroom date (which she and my father has not missed a single one of before her pancreatic attack landing her intubated in the ICU), I personally drove her to the emergency room from one emotional distress after another. She was accompanied by my father Skender Abazaga who suffers from asthma and would experience asthma attacks after every single one of these instances of whether visiting Kushtrim in the miserable room behind bars or hearing the worst of things being said in the courtroom about his son for the first time ever.

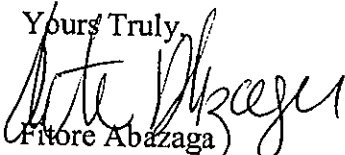


As for Kushtrim himself, I would like your honor to picture a self proclaimed his family's protector young man since the age of 15 who went out of his way to make sure his family was okay from as little as having a bad day to making sure the Serbian army did not enter his home to kill all of them. A young man who continues to take on that responsibility long after he came to the United States by working multiple jobs in helping support his family as much as he possibly could. He made a mistake and it is costing him much, much more than the awful days he is spending behind bars. He is seeing his family go through hell because of his situation, he missed his little sister's wedding which went on with extreme worry of not knowing where Kushtrim was, he was not able to be by his mother's side on the days when we all thought were her last and because of this mistake, he is not able to support us all financially while we are going through hundreds of thousands of dollars in medical bills; furthermore, he will most likely be deported back to Kosovo where he will not see his family for indefinite amount of times and still not be able to provide the support system he worked so hard his entire life to achieve.

So I ask myself, is this not punishment enough? Kushtrim has paid the price of this mistake in more ways than one and while from any other mistake, most people have the luxury of taking the punishment, learning from it and moving on, I don't believe Kushtrim and our family have that. Having him deported and not being able to see him for indefinite amount of times, will be a punishment and a reminder of this for all of us in every holiday, every birthday, every special occasion our family will experience in the future such as engagement, marriage, birth of nieces and nephews etc.

We are only pleading with your honor and the court to use your judgment and wisdom and show mercy by helping us lessen this punishment our entire family has taken on and guide us to a path of moving away and on with our lives the best way that we can, considering these circumstances.

Yours Truly,



Fitore Abazaga

646-339-3247

2144 Bronx Park East #2D  
Bronx, NY 10462

Mr. Arben Skivjani  
500 Snows Mill Avenue, Apt. 818  
Tuscaloosa, AL 35406

Honorable Judge Dora L. Irizarry  
New York, New York

Re: Kushtrim Abazaga

September 11, 2013

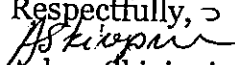
Dear Honorable Judge Irizarry:

My name is Arben Skivjani, a resident of Tuscaloosa, Alabama. I work as an Economic Forecaster at the University of Alabama. I am writing this letter to support my brother-in-law Kushtrim Abazaga.

I have known Kushtrim for over 8 years now, and am proud to have him as my brother-in-law. He has visited with us in many occasions, as I have met him many times at his family's residence in the Bronx, NY. Ever since I have met him, I have noticed many of his good qualities that every man would be proud to have.

He is a very family-oriented person, who puts the honor of family first. He is always willing to provide for his family, and help people around him. During the years I was dating his sister, now my wife, Krenare, Kushtrim was very instrumental in bringing us closer together, as he would take us to many nice places around the City, always trying to make us feel comfortable. In July of 2012, we visited with Kushtrim and his family in the Bronx, NY, where he had the chance to meet his 5 week niece, our newborn, for the first time. It was a joy to see him bond with his niece, and I am sure my daughter is proud to have him as an uncle.

Thank you for your taking your time to read this letter.

Respectfully,  
  
Arben Skivjani